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# **Possible Ways to Improve the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum**



**South Carolina Budget and Control Board**

By Shirley D. Schoonover  
Administrative Assistant  
South Carolina Confederate Relic Room & Museum  
Columbia Mills Building  
301 Gervais Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201  
Phone: 737-8093  
E-mail: [sschoon@crr.state.sc.us](mailto:sschoon@crr.state.sc.us)

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## **Founding and History of the Museum**

The South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum (SCCRRM) is the oldest museum in the Columbia area and the third oldest museum in South Carolina – preceded only by the Charleston Museum of Art in Charleston. Founded in 1896 by the Wade Hampton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the Museum focuses on South Carolina military history from the Revolutionary War to the present, with a strong emphasis on South Carolina's Confederate era.

A nationally known Civil War flag collection, a significant South Carolina uniform collection, and a growing weapons collection, are complemented by a small historical archive and a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century textile collection, allowing the Museum to interpret the political and social influences on South Carolina's military history. The SCCRRM is also one of less than twenty percent of South Carolina's approximately 180 museums and historic sites accredited by the *American Association of Museums*.

Originally housed in the South Caroliniana Library of South Carolina College, now the University of South Carolina, the SCCRRM moved to a room adjacent to the Senate Gallery in the South Carolina State House in the late 1800s. In 1909, the General Assembly assumed the fiscal support of the Museum, appropriating money annually for its operation. The SCCRRM remained in the State House for over sixty years, until around 1959, when it moved to the old South Carolina Archives and History Building on the corner of Bull and Senate Streets. In 1971, the Museum moved to the World War I Memorial Building, a Depression-era Works Progress Administration building constructed in 1935. It originally occupied only the first floor but later expanded upstairs to the second floor chapel area.

## **Recent Activities of the Museum**

In 1998, the SCCRRM became an agency under the South Carolina Budget and Control Board and began a process of revitalization that culminated with the July 2001 relocation of the Museum to the Columbia Mills Building adjacent to the South Carolina *State Museum*, and the development of a new exhibit plan over the next year, which opened at the end of September 2002. A major part of the Museum's historic flag collection was conserved during this four-year period, as were uniforms, weapons, and accoutrements.

The South Carolina General Assembly decided to place the Museum under the Board for several reasons. First, the SCCRRM had existed as an independent, state-funded institution since 1909, yet it had no enabling legislation. It existed for over eighty years as a line-item appropriation in the annual state budget. Second, while there was strong support for the Museum in the General Assembly, there was no defined authority over the Museum – who hired and fired the director and who insured accountability. Third, the budget was steadily shrinking, and the General Assembly recognized that the Museum had a historically substantial and valuable collection approaching a critical state of deterioration. Finally, the Museum was stagnating in its location adjacent to the university campus, surrounded by the University's historic district that limited expansion and available parking.

The move to the Columbia Mills Building was mandated by Legislative Proviso in 1999. The State Library for the Blind, part of the State Library System that occupied this space was relocating to the old Archives and History building on Senate and Bull Streets. With the proposed children's museum, *EdVenture*, planning to open at Columbia

Mills, this space had great potential for a museum complex that would include the SCCRRM.

The cost of opening this new Museum was \$628,359 for renovation of space, exhibit design, and exhibit fabrication and installation. \$451,880 was appropriated during FY99-00. Ninety percent of the remaining funding came from FY00-01, just missing the budget crisis. Money for conservation, mannequins, forms, brochures, education materials, stocking the gift shop, etc. came from our annual budget and FY99-00 one-time supplemental funding. The cost has been a bargain for the state – especially for what is virtually a new museum. Of course, this cost does not reflect the significant support that the SCCRRM received from the Board – particularly from the General Services' and the CIO's offices, who advised and worked with us to create this museum.

Watson, Tate, Savory Architects of Columbia oversaw the project and contributed the overall design for the renovation for the space. Grant Construction did the renovation, raising the ceiling in exhibit areas and adding walls to make storage and work areas. General Services primarily furnished painting and carpet. The new Museum exhibit plan was designed by Haley-Sharpe, an exhibit designer from Great Britain trying to build a reputation in the States. They did a minimum design and assisted in oversight while the Museum staff produced all material – i.e. images, text, labels, etc. – for the exhibits. Southern Custom Exhibits from Anniston, Alabama, constructed and installed all cases, text panels, and wall panels, as well as mounted all the artifacts in the exhibits.

The theme of the exhibit plan is the "South Carolina Martial Tradition". The primary focus is South Carolina from the Revolution through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Museum was originally founded. A survey of South Carolina history within a

national context allows us to showcase our significant South Carolina artifact collection. Many artifacts that have not been viewed in years have been conserved and are now on display. The exhibit plan illustrates some of the issues that led to the Civil War and spans from the Revolution to the reunification of the country during the Spanish-American War. It allows the Museum to offer material compatible with South Carolina secondary school curriculums and college survey courses.

A second phase of the project was originally going to focus on 20<sup>th</sup> century South Carolina military history, but because of the uncertain budget climate it was abandoned. Instead, we added World War I and World War II exhibits. We plan to add exhibits on Korea, Viet Nam, Desert Storm, and the War in Iraq sometime in the future. Major exhibits for a proposed rotating gallery on the Civil War blockade of the southern coastline and on World War I and the Columbia area are currently being planned.

### **Current and Foreseen Problems Affecting the Museum**

The recent move and renovation of the Museum has led to a probing for other possible ways that the Museum could improve its current situation. One potential problem for the Museum is the fact that many people have never heard of the SCCRRM. If public awareness of the Museum is limited, then the recent update of the Museum will be for naught. Many people come to the SCCRRM mistaking it for the *State Museum*. This problem could be alleviated if the SCCRRM had greater publicity and its existence was common knowledge instead of just being unheard of.

Part of the publicity problem is having the funds required to do so successfully. Since the Museum is allotted only a certain amount of funding annually, having the money necessary to actively advertise the Museum could become a problem in the future.

As it currently stands, the only additional method of providing for the Museum's extra advertising is with revenue from admissions.

Another major problem facing the Museum is the negative impression of the Museum that some people get because of its current name, The South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum. The confederate flag controversy has had a greatly detrimental effect on the Museum's attendance over at least the past ten years. This, coupled with its current name, has led to a falling in popularity. Since this is such a major issue afflicting the Museum, I conducted a random mail-out survey across different counties of the state of South Carolina, to determine the public's generalized view of the Museum and the public's impression of its current name.

### **Review of the Surveys**

Before the mail-out survey was done, a preliminary survey was conducted of part of the Certified Public Manager (CPM) class. **(See Appendix A)** Among the survey group, the majority answered that they would visit a museum that featured the Civil War era and the Confederacy. **(See Appendix B)** However, the CPM class was nearly evenly divided on whether or not the word "Confederate" in the name of a public place would keep them from visiting there. The responses from these preliminary surveys were given a numerical score, between negative six and positive six, and the individual survey's scores were summed together to determine approximately where the survey group stood as a whole. **(See Appendix C)** The results of this preliminary survey showed that most of the class surveyed was not negatively affected by the "Confederate" issue.

This survey, however, was only preliminary and thus lacked the scope and scale to be truly accurate as a representation of the state's views as a whole. Therefore, a mail-

out survey was designed and conducted in order to yield a quality estimation of the public's standpoint on whether or not the majority of people in South Carolina were negatively affected by the "Confederate" issue and the Museum's name.

**(See Appendix D)** The survey period spanned over two work weeks, to allow ample time for respondents to reply. In addition, a complimentary pass for free admission was offered as an incentive to encourage participation. **(See Appendix E)** The survey was mailed with a pre-addressed postage paid envelope in which to return it. The complimentary passes that were mailed out to all respondents will be tracked, to see if they do indeed visit the Museum.

The first survey question stated whether the survey group had ever heard of the SCCRRM. The survey group was almost evenly divided, only slightly more saying they were aware of its existence at fifty-three percent. **(See Appendix F)** This shows that the majority of the public has heard of the Museum, but not nearly as many as have heard of the new children's museum, *EdVenture*. As you can see, there is plenty of room for the Museum's popularity to improve.

The second survey question asked what type of museum or museums the survey group would prefer to visit. **(See Appendix G)** I listed four categories of museums on the survey: Civil War history, military history, general South Carolina history, or an unlisted type of museum (such as an art museum). I found that of the four categories, thirty-nine percent of the survey group would visit a general South Carolina history museum. Also, I found that both military history museums and Civil War history museums were equally popular among the survey group at twenty-three percent apiece. These results show that the South Carolina public is most inclined to visit a generalized

South Carolina history museum before visiting one of the other choices. For the SCCRRM this means that if there were a name change, it should be revised to fit the description of a general South Carolina history museum.

The third survey question requested for those members of the survey group that had been to the SCCRRM before to evaluate their visit. **(See Appendix H)** Of those who had visited the “old” location, the majority had a good impression of the Museum, while most of the others were very impressed and a few of these said the collection was okay. No one who had visited the “old” location was unimpressed. However, only two respondents had been to the “new” location! One of these individuals was very impressed while the other individual had at least a favorable impression of the Museum at its “new” location. Of the many people I surveyed, having only two people to have been to the new location shows that the Museum is still in dire need of increased public awareness.

Finally, I split those surveyed into two groups: those who have visited the SCCRRM and Museum and those who have not visited. I then compared the two types on which categories of museums they would most likely visit. **(See Appendix I)** Since the people surveyed were allowed to choose more than one category of museum, if desired, the percentages given do not add up to one-hundred percent.

Of those who had visited the SCCRRM, a fifty-four percent majority said they would likely visit a general South Carolina history museum. Forty-five percent were partial to a Civil War history museum and only thirty-six percent for a military history museum. No one in the survey group which had visited the SCCRRM chose the “other” museum category.



The group that had not ever visited the SCCRRM gave somewhat similar results. The general South Carolina history museum also ranked the highest among this group at about fifty percent, a clear majority again. Civil War history and military history museums were about equally popular, with the “other” museum category at nearly the same margin.

This comparison shows above all doubt, that the South Carolina public is more prone to visit a general South Carolina history museum than any other type of museum. While Civil War history museums ranked second among the respondents’ preferences, these museums do not hold the same popularity among people who have not visited the SCCRRM, for whatever reason. Clearly, if there were to be a name change for the SCCRRM, then it needs to be reflective of the public’s opinion and so, in-line with that of a general South Carolina history museum.

### **Recommendations and Current Initiatives for Improvement of the Museum**

The following is a list of ideas and recently implemented solutions designed to increase the Museum’s public awareness, improve the Museum’s public image, increase attendance, and improve the SCCRRM overall:

- After the mail-out survey was conducted and the respondents’ answers examined, I found that many people suggested that the Museum did, without a doubt, need more publicity and promotion all over the state, especially outside of the Columbia area. Therefore, only just recently has the SCCRRM begun advertising with the 2003-2004 Columbia Regional Visitors Guide, Cultural Council of Richland/Lexington Counties Benefit Card, and the 2004 Darlington Raceway

Fan Guide. This increases the Museum's publicity all over the state and provides a magnet for attracting new visitors to our museum.

- Joint ticketing with the *State Museum* has improved attendance at the SCCRRM. Since the *State Museum* is more popular, they in turn sell more joint tickets which increases attendance and revenue at the SCCRRM. If we could convince the *State Museum* to discount their joint ticket by a dollar, then we could possibly double the number of joint tickets sold. Also, the joint ticket program has not been marketed as aggressively as it should be.
- We must continue to send out brochures to all the South Carolina Welcome Centers and to area attractions. The Museum needs to make certain that there is enough funding to print and distribute thousands of brochures. It is important to carry on with this program in the future.
- Since the Museum has such difficulty in informing the public of its whereabouts, partly due to the rudimentary signage for the Museum around town, it is critical that the Museum establish a means of erecting Wayfinder signs in and around the Columbia metropolitan area.
- The Museum also has trouble getting Columbia Mills Building visitors to realize that the SCCRRM is located in the same building but is not affiliated with the *State Museum*. Perhaps if a large reception area was built in the atrium, right where visitors enter through the doors, then there would be fewer problems with visitors not being able to find their way in the building. This reception area could sell individual tickets for the *State Museum* or the SCCRRM, as well as joint tickets. The receptionist could inform visitors as to the correct location of both

museums and, in addition, provide visitors with a helpful map of the entire museum complex. *EdVenture*, the new children's museum, could also be incorporated into this idea, so that visitors could buy a ticket to any of the three museums at one central location.

- The Museum needs to start a "friends" program, similar to that of the *State Museum*. This much needed "friends" organization could support the Museum, conduct and advertise the public programs, and administer an alternative fund-raising campaign to supplement the direct state government appropriation.
- Meanwhile, the Museum could find the beginning of radio advertising advantageous. Funding for this could also be provided by a "friends" program.
- Furthermore, we need to be involved with the Columbia Meeting Planners. This is a network to reach meeting and event planners. This would, of course, provide additional revenue for the Museum during a time of budgetary deficiencies.
- Some survey respondents also suggested the following recommendations for the Museum:
  - a) Adding a story time room to the collection, in order to hear tapes of people from various time periods.
  - b) Adding a more kid-friendly element to the collection; one respondent said the exhibits were too advanced for a third-grade class.
  - c) Expanding the on-site library so that visitors can do more in depth research.

d) Adding a map/locator in publications, detailing the whereabouts of the Museum; for example, showing adjacency to the *State Museum*.

➤ As a final point, because the old name does not accurately describe what the Museum has become, a name change for the Museum has been discussed for a number of years. With the flag controversy in the State House still fresh, the Museum has been hesitant to change the name even though our mission statement declares, “[O]ur emphasis is on South Carolina’s Confederate era, but we hold in trust artifacts, papers, art, and memorabilia...[regarding]...South Carolina’s distinguished military heritage from the colonial era to the present.” To some portion of the Museum’s supporters, changing the name could be seen as an act of alienation. For these reasons, the Museum has been unwilling to changing its name. However, it may be time that the name change discussion is reopened for debate. So, if the SCCRRM were to change its name, to what would it be changed? Based on the results of the mail-out survey, and as previously mentioned briefly, the name should most likely be changed to reflect the following:

- 1) The current exhibits, programs, and the overall collection of the Museum
- 2) What the public desires in a museum and what they want to see
- 3) And the most attractive name for this museum

With all this in mind, perhaps the name best suited for the Museum would be along the lines of the following:

- 1) *The South Carolina Historical War Museum*
- 2) *The South Carolina Heritage Museum*
- 3) *The South Carolina History Museum*

These are just a few possibilities to help lead the Museum toward a more neutral-imaged name.

### **Conclusion and Implementation**

While the abovementioned recommendations are very impressive ideas, they will mean nothing if no action is taken to set them into motion. Some of these initiatives have already been started and their effects will be seen in the near future. Other initiatives, such as the discussion of a name change for the Museum, will no doubt take more time, effort, and diligence. However, as long as the Museum continues to look onward for ways to change and become better-suited for South Carolina's citizens, future generations will surely reap the benefits.

## REFERENCES

South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum Annual Report. 1998-1999.

South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum Strategic Planning Report.  
1998-1999.

South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum Accountability Report.  
FY01-02, FY99-00.

American Association of Museums Report. Accreditation Self-Study, 2003.

Act of General Assembly. Section 1-11-1120, Section 1-11-1140; FY99-00.

South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum Mission Statement.

“Relics Bring to Life Confederate Period.” The State and The Columbia Record Magazine. June 11, 1961.

“Confederate Museum Outgrows Its Name.” The State. February 28, 1971.

“Southern History Comes to Life in Museum.” The Columbia Record.  
January 30, 1974.

## Appendix A

### **Preliminary Survey for The Confederate Project**

1. Would you visit a museum that dealt with the Civil War and the Confederacy?

(Answers: -2=no, +2=yes)

2. Would the word "Confederate" in the name of a public place, keep you from visiting there?

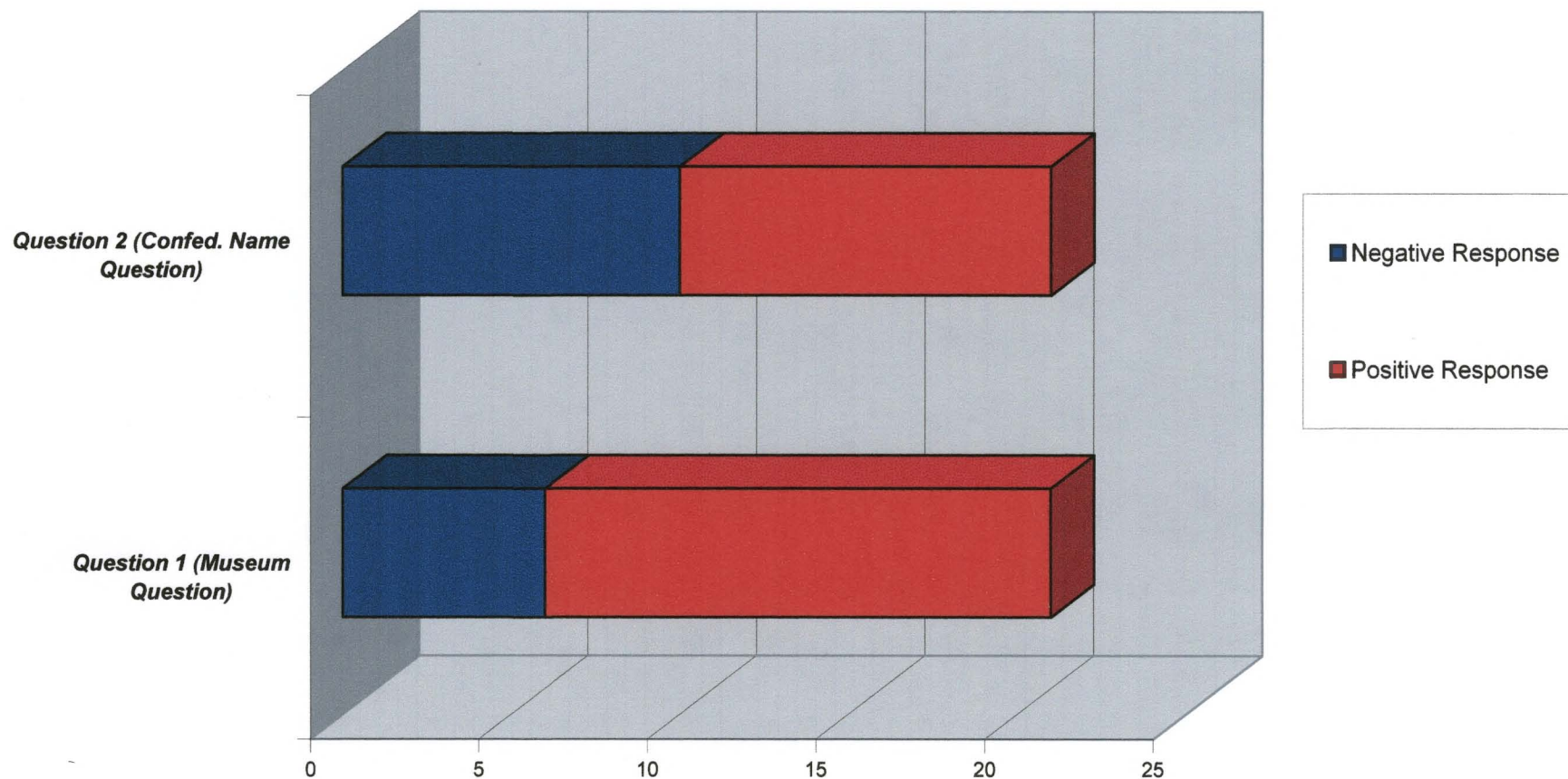
(Answers: -2= yes, +2=no)

3. Do you feel offended by the usage of the word "Confederate", in any circumstance?

(Answers: -2=very offended, -1= slightly offended, +2=not offended at all)

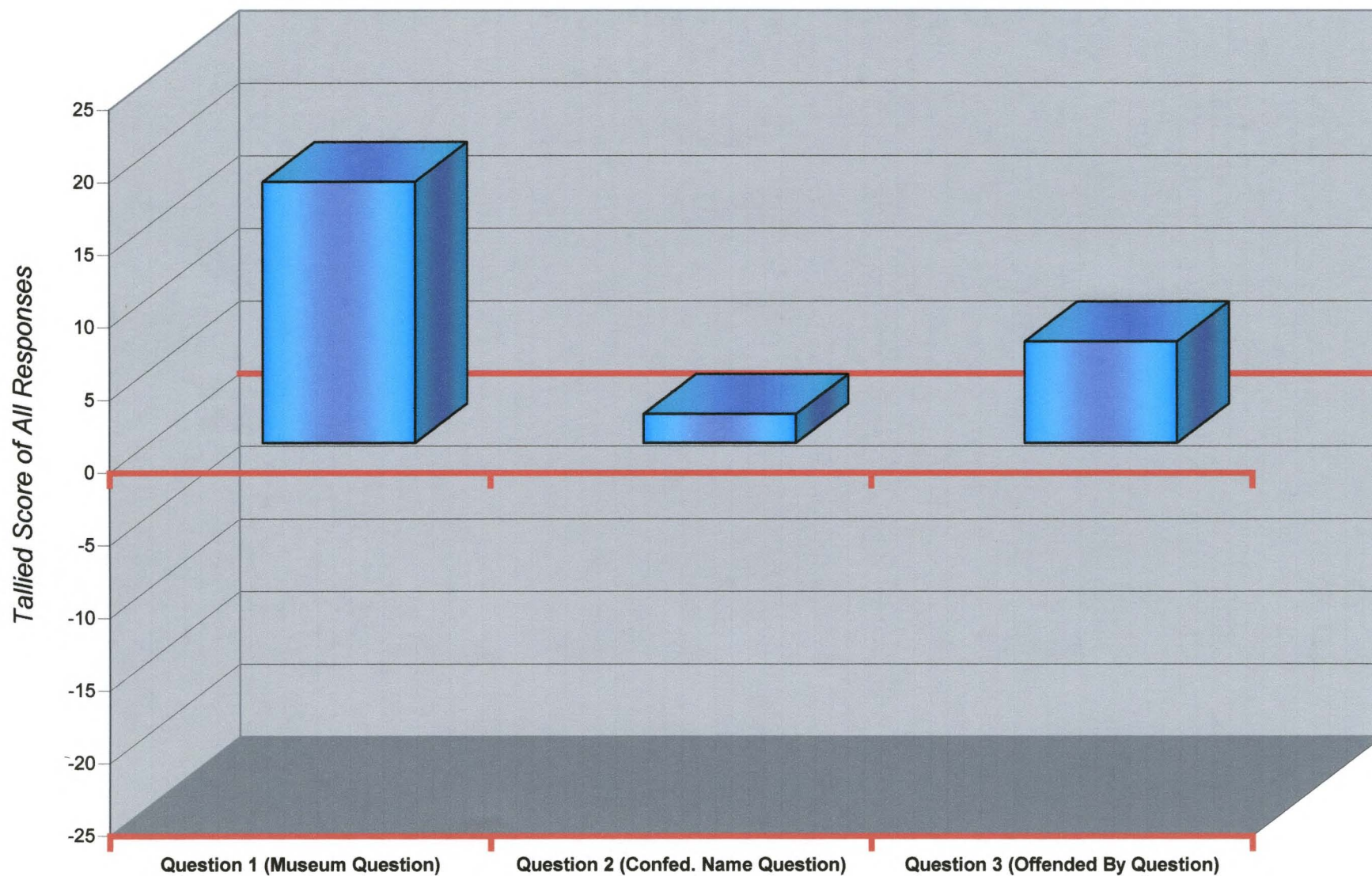
\*\*\*Individual surveys will be given a score between -6 and +6, depending upon the answers received. Individual survey scores will be summed together for a relative idea on where the survey group stands, as a whole.

**Comparison of Negative & Positive Responses on the CPM Class Survey**





# Tallied Scores for Each Question of the CPM Class Survey



## SCCRRM Evaluation and Transition Survey

The South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum is conducting a survey in order to establish data regarding visitor satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement throughout the museum.

**Please complete the following survey and return the survey to SCCRRM using the postage paid envelope provided to you. Please complete and return the survey by Saturday, November 8, 2003. As a token of our appreciation we would like to invite you to visit the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum by offering you a free admission pass if the survey is returned by the deadline.**

Thank you in advance for your participation. The SCCRRM appreciates your cooperation in our effort to improve the museum.

Shirley D. Schoonover  
Chief of Operations, SCCRRM

### **Please answer the following questions:**

1. Are you aware of the existence of the "South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum"?  

☐ Yes  
☐ No
  
2. Which type of museum would you be more inclined to visit?  

☐ South Carolina Civil War history museum  
☐ South Carolina military history museum  
☐ General S.C. History museum  
☐ Other type of museum
  
3. Have you ever visited the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum? If yes, please answer the following question. If no, then skip ahead. Please circle whether it was at its **old** location near USC or at the **new** location by the State Museum. What was your overall impression?  

☐ Very Impressed  
☐ Good  
☐ OK  
☐ Not Impressed

## Appendix D

4. Do you have any recommendations for the "South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum"?

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5. Are you: (check one)

- ☐ A member of a visiting school group  
    ☐ High School  
    ☐ Middle School  
    ☐ Elementary School  
☐ A member of a civic group  
☐ A member of a private business group  
☐ Other group:

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(fill in)

6. Please provide your home address (no name is necessary), so we may send you a free admission pass on receipt of your completed survey. Thank you.

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***This certificate entitles you to  
one complimentary pass to***

***The South Carolina  
Confederate  
Relic Room and Museum  
301 Gervais Street***

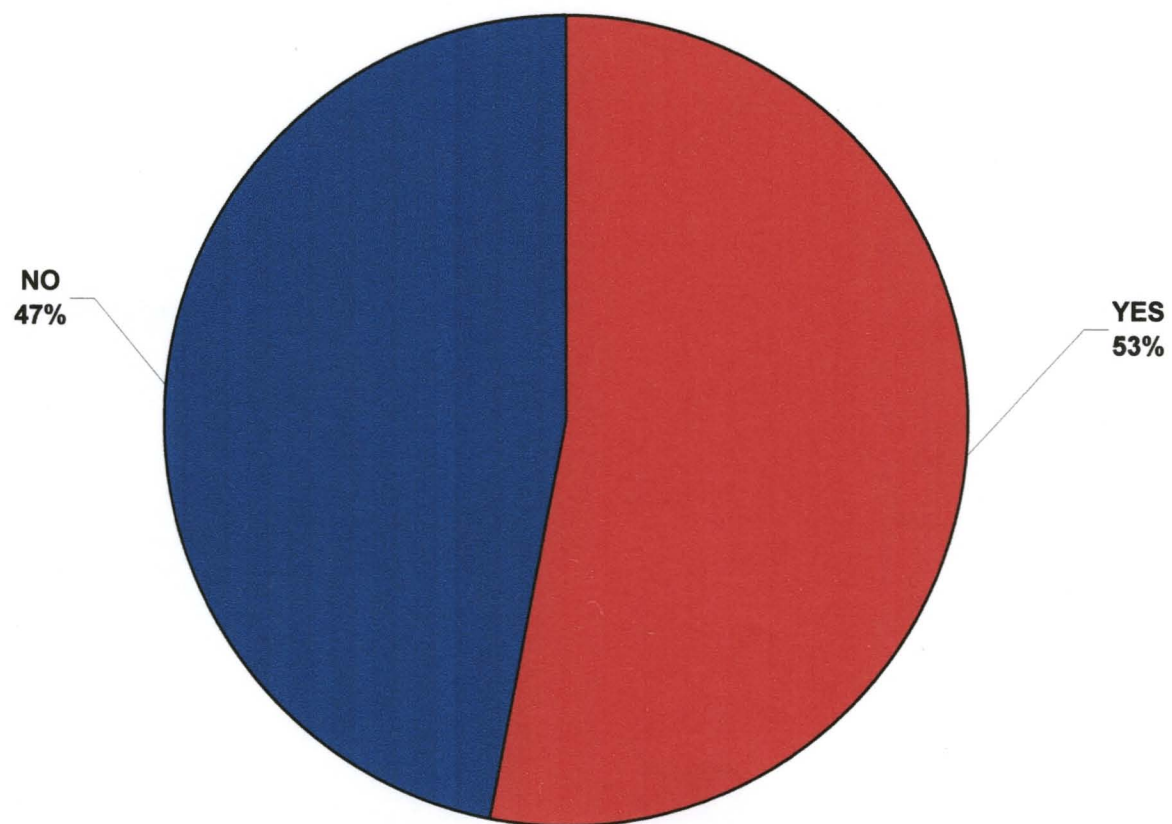
***Operating hours are  
Tuesday – Saturday  
10:00-5:00  
and the  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday  
of the month  
1:00-5:00***



South Carolina Budget and Control Board

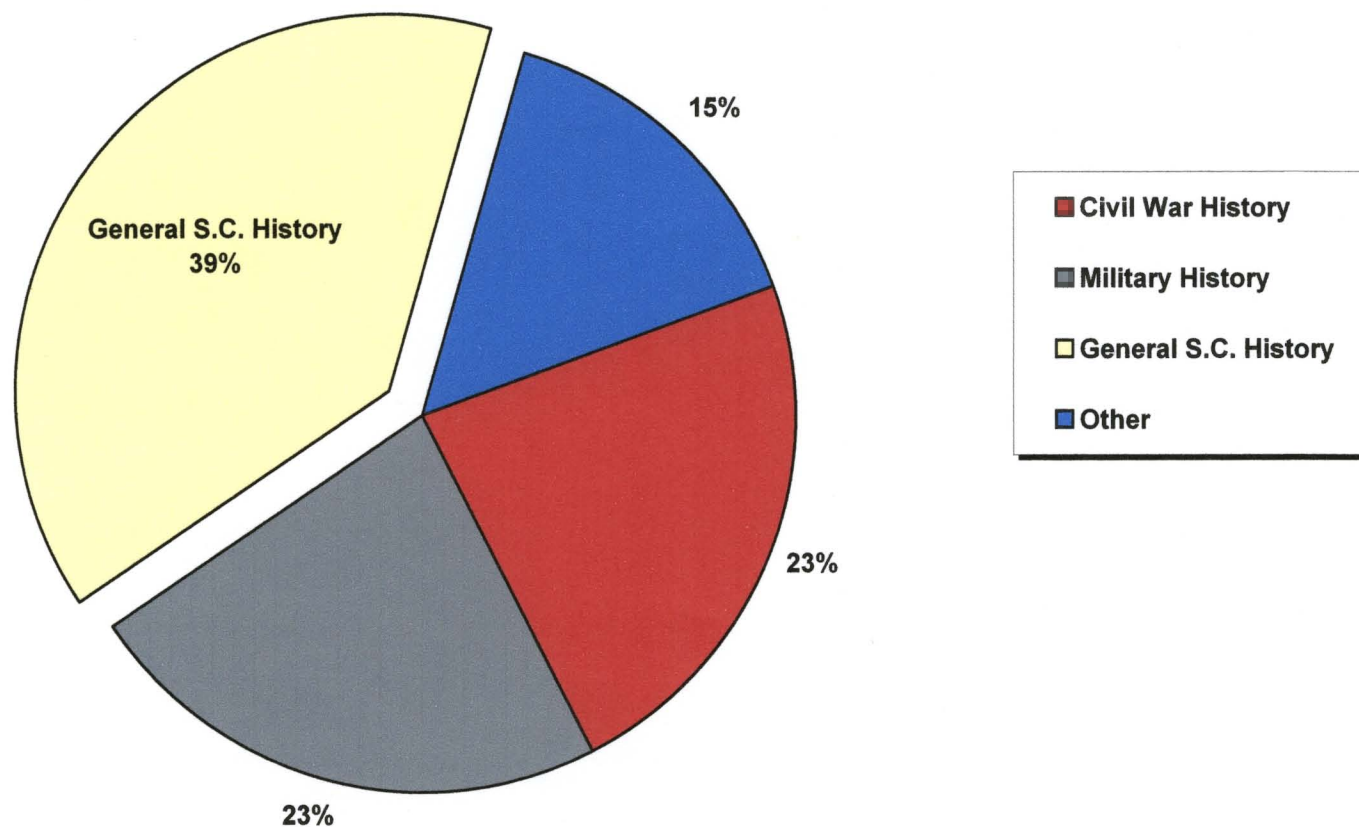
**(803) 737-8093**

**Survey Question 1: Have you ever heard of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum?**



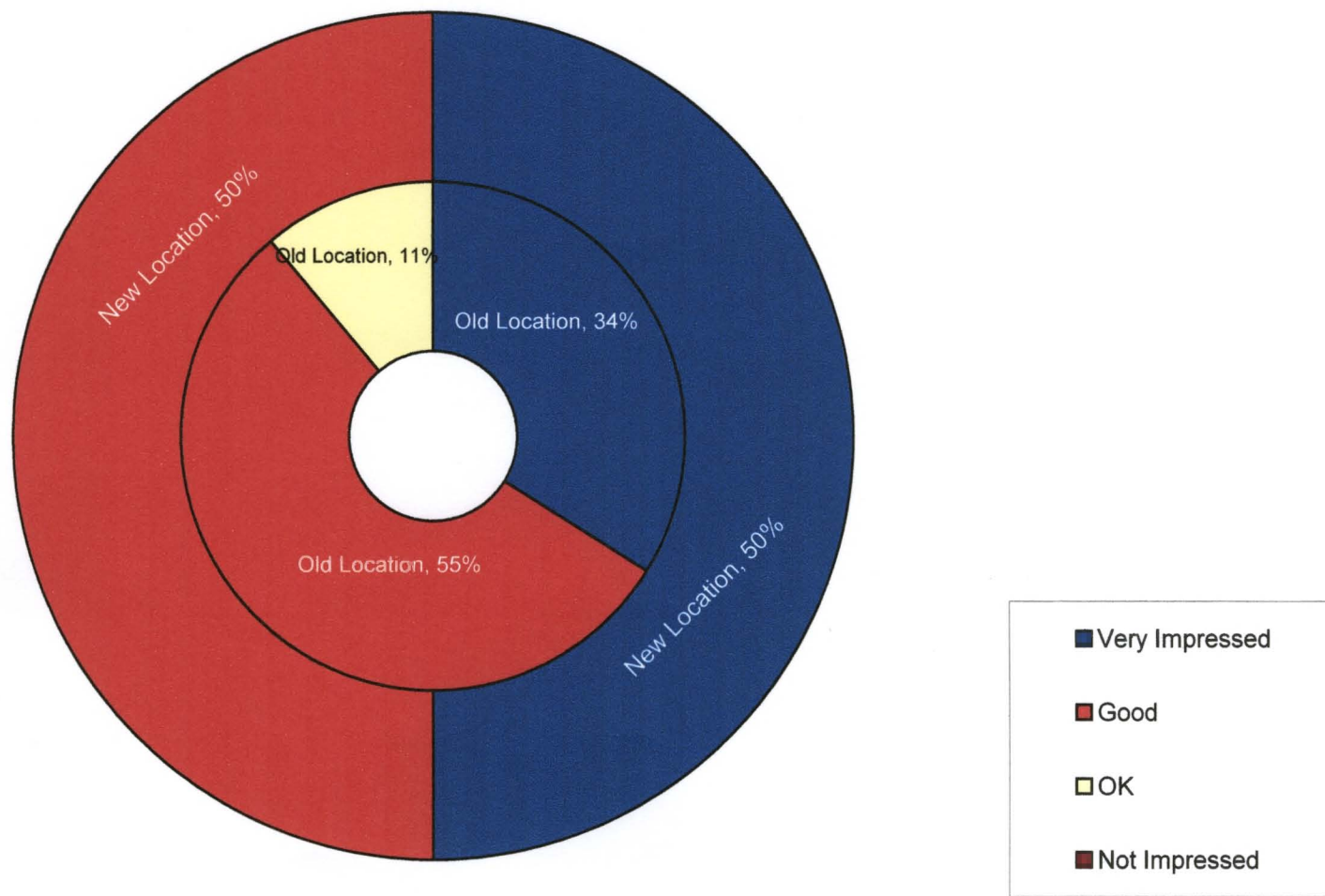
**Survey Question 2: Which museum(s) would you be more inclined to visit?**

**(percentage of all responses)**





**Survey Question 3: Past Visitors' Evaluations of the Museum,  
Comparing Both the Old and New Locations**



**Comparison of Respondents Who Have or Have Not Visited the SCCRRM,  
and the Type of Museum(s) They Would Prefer to Visit Respectively**

